

## **Charter Commission Minutes**

### **Amherst Charter Commission meeting of Thursday, June 22 2017**

Amherst Police Station Community Room

Members present: Andy Churchill, Nick Grabbe, Tom Fricke, Julia Rueschemeyer, Mandi Jo Hanneke, Irv Rhodes, Diana Stein, Gerry Weiss (late).

Members absent: Meg Gage

Collins Center: Tanya Stepasiuk

### **Agenda**

1. Call to order, approve agenda, approve minutes (5 minutes)
2. Public comment (15 minutes)
3. Work on master draft language (focus on Transition article, others) (3 hours, 25 minutes)
4. Topics not reasonably anticipated by the Chair 48 hours prior to the meeting
5. Planning for future meetings (15 minutes)
6. Adjourn

### **CALL TO ORDER, APPROVE AGENDA, APPROVE MINUTES**

**The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm.**

SUMMARY: This meeting was devoted to technical drafting of various sections of the draft charter, working from the following documents:

- Master Draft - June 20, 2017
- Transition Article Draft - June 22, 2017
- Master Draft Notes - June 20, 2017
- Transition Timeline-Initial Proposal

The work of this meeting is reflected in the subsequent drafts:

- Master Draft - June 28, 2017
- Transition Article - July 3, 2017

Additional notes on aspects of the discussion follow.

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Meeting starts with approval of agenda.

Going over wording and clauses of charter. For further details, see the video of the meeting.

5:42 Stepasiuk: Let's get into the specificity of this.

5:47 Hanneke brings up non-voting members that can be switched

Andy: so what I'm hearing is there is a list of special acts you have...

5:50

Stepasiuk: Up next is sort of the meat of things...

This is the proposal we came up with...

Stepasiuk walks through Amherst Transition Calendar...

5:59 – discussed term length for appointment positions

6:10 Irv feels approval of budget is “very problematic”

Irv: Why have the official election of the council take place a year after? Why isn't it possible to have September election?

6:12 *Council discusses 2016 elections of East Longmeadow, how to meet in middle from East Longmeadow extreme*

Stepasiuk proposes spring election calendar

Long debate of spring vs fall elections...odd vs even years – apparently fall offers better turnout  
To have fall even year elections would need special act by Legislation, annually

6:25 debate over 2, 3, 4-year school committee terms

6:35 Hanneke does not like length of transition

6:36 Stepasiuk: If there's consensus on this issue, we can talk about

At 6:52 Andy: Is there anyone who doesn't think we should stick with two?  
It sounds like everyone is willing to go with two.

Nick: Are we going to have a vote?

Andy: It seems like we have a consensus.

Notes:

March 27 – charter vote

Prelim?

Fricke: How many weeks between election and prelim?

Mid-May prelim

Mid-June election

Town meeting, late April/early May

7:11 – Gerry Weiss arrives

Election process:

Aiming for special act one off: Sept prelim, Nov elect, Dec swear in

Alternative:

Dec prelim, Jan election, Feb swear in

7:25 Irv makes motion that we confirm two year for all elected offices

Diana seconded

Andy: all those in favor...it's unanimous

Gerry: Any vote I make does not necessarily mean I'm in favor.

Julia: Seconded.

Moving on to Section B

7:50

Moving on to Section K

Stepasiuk: This is where we're giving some allowances on what the councilors can do, after the first election when they get sworn in.

7:54 Section L

Licensing

7:59 Section N

Salaries

Fricke: We have numbers for comparable communities

It ranges from \$2,000-8,000 (hits most of them)

Northampton: \$9,500

Hanneke: It's in line with what I was thinking

*Members discuss stipends for Amherst council, leaning towards \$5,000*

Irv asks about cost differences

Nick wants to stay between Easthampton and Northampton

Andy: \$5k and \$7k for council and \$3k and \$5k for school committee

8:12 section O

If there's a permanent town manager in office they will continue until town council hires new manager (if they so desire) – contract until June 1

8:14 Section Q

Charter bylaws

Andy: Is that basically the general bylaws and not the zoning bylaws?

Delete confusing sentence regarding informing sitting president of council meetings (regarding elections of new president?)

8:17 Section S

What to do with multi-member bodies when charter is passed

“Can leave them the way they are...or terminate and reappoint”

Currently worded: everyone will be terminated as of Oct. 1

Andy: I kind of would like a schedule of when their terms are up

Diana: I don't see the point of giving them all up at one time

Tom: Seems logical

Andy: Maybe we could say “new council members will be appointed by Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>”

Tom: Can the council remove someone previously appointed...are the terms set in stone?  
Stepasiuk: Most would say, no you can't remove them. But you can propose a bylaw.

Andy: I'm kind of thinking if we can't figure something out really good really quickly we should just move on.  
Tonya mentions bylaws and likelihood.

Hanneke: For town manager appointments we're just going to let them expire and reappoint.

8:30 Section 10-8

Within 6 months of office town council will appoint ... 7 members for committee

8:44 Section 10-9

What we want the council to put on their agenda

Andy: We had talked about participatory budgeting...I would suggest we put that in here and leave it to the council

8:49 10-10

Adoption measures to assist with transition

8:54 Diana brings point out of order: it would be good to have a non-voting member of council to attend school committee meetings as often as possible

Decision to appoint one or more liaison

9:00

Section 6

9:05

Section 6-2 the merit principle

Hanneke recommends rewording as to not connote exclusion

Documents presented:

- Master Draft - June 20, 2017
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Respectfully Submitted,  
Emmett Warren